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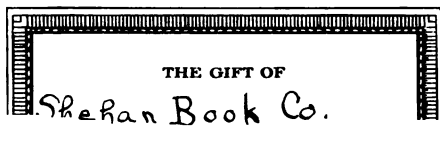
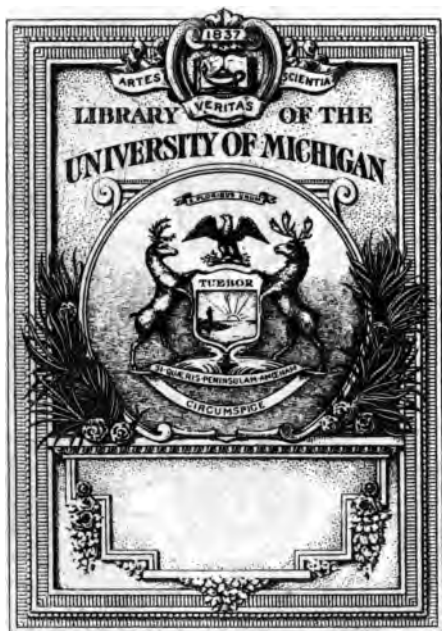
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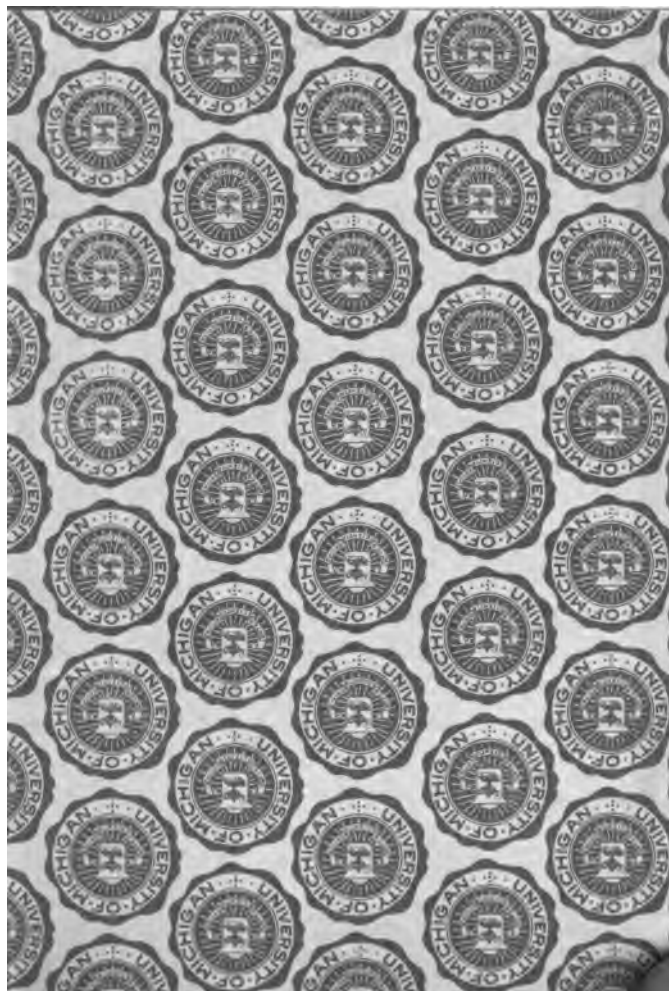
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The People's Edition

A Dream of Fair Women and other Poems

The
Poetical Works
—
of

ALFRED LORD TENNYSON



A Dream of Fair Women
and other Poems

London
MACMILLAN AND CO.
AND NEW YORK
1895

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A DREAM OF FAIR WOMEN

I READ, before my eyelids dropt their shade,
‘*The Legend of Good Women*,’ long ago
Sung by the morning star of song, who made
His music heard below ;

Dan Chaucer, the first warbler, whose sweet breath
Preluded those melodious bursts that fill
The spacious times of great Elizabeth
With sounds that echo still.

And, for a while, the knowledge of his art
Held me above the subject, as strong gales
Hold swollen clouds from raining, tho’ my heart,
Brimful of those wild tales.

Charged both mine eyes with tears. In every land
I saw, wherever light illumineth,
Beauty and anguish walking hand in hand
The downward slope to death.



Those far-renowned brides of ancient song
Peopled the hollow dark, like burning stars,
And I heard sounds of insult, shame, and wrong,
And trumpets blown for wars ;

And clattering flints batter'd with clanging hoofs ;
And I saw crowds in column'd sanctuaries ;
And forms that pass'd at windows and on roofs
Of marble palaces ;

Corpses across the threshold ; heroes tall
Dislodging pinnacle and parapet
Upon the tortoise creeping to the wall ;
Lances in ambush set ;

And high shrine-doors burst thro' with heated blasts
That run before the fluttering tongues of fire ;
White surf wind-scatter'd over sails and masts,
And ever climbing higher ;

Squadrons and squares of men in brazen plates,
Scaffolds, still sheets of water, divers woes,
Ranges of glimmering vaults with iron grates,
And hush'd seraglios.



So shape chased shape as swift as, when to land
Bluster the winds and tides the self-same way,
Crisp foam-flakes scud along the level sand
Torn from the fringe of spray.

I started once, or seem'd to start in pain,
Resolved on noble things, and strove to speak,
As when a great thought strikes along the brain,
And flushes all the cheek.

And once my arm was lifted to hew down
A cavalier from off his saddle-bow,
That bore a lady from a leaguer'd town ;
And then, I know not how,

All those sharp fancies, by down-lapsing thought
Stream'd onward, lost their edges, and did creep,
Roll'd on each other, rounded, smooth'd, and brought
Into the gulfs of sleep.

At last methought that I had wander'd far
In an old wood : fresh-wash'd in coolest dew
The maiden splendours of the morning star
Shook in the stedfast blue.

Enormous elm-tree-boles did stoop and lean
Upon the dusky brushwood underneath
Their broad curved branches, fledged with clearest
green,
New from its silken sheath.

The dim red morn had died, her journey done,
And with dead lips smiled at the twilight plain,
Half-fall'n across the threshold of the sun,
Never to rise again.

There was no motion in the dumb dead air,
Not any song of bird or sound of rill :
Gross darkness of the inner sepulchre
Is not so deadly still

As that wide forest. Growths of jasmine turn'd
Their humid arms festooning tree to tree,
And at the root thro' lush green grasses burn'd
The red anemone.

I knew the flowers, I knew the leaves, I knew
The tearful glimmer of the languid dawn
On those long, rank, dark wood-walks drench'd in
dew,
Leading from lawn to lawn.

The smell of violets, hidden in the green,
 Pour'd back into my empty soul and frame
The times when I remember to have been
 Joyful and free from blame.

And from within me a clear under-tone
 Thrill'd thro' mine ears in that unblissful clime,
'Pass freely thro' : the wood is all thine own,
 Until the end of time.'

At length I saw a lady within call,
 Stillter than chisell'd marble, standing there ;
A daughter of the gods, divinely tall,
 And most divinely fair.

Her loveliness with shame and with surprise
 Froze my swift speech : she turning on my face
The star-like sorrows of immortal eyes,
 Spoke slowly in her place.

'I had great beauty : ask thou not my name :
 No one can be more wise than destiny.
Many drew swords and died. Where'er I came
 I brought calamity.'

'No marvel, sovereign lady : in fair field
Myself for such a face had boldly died,'
I answer'd free ; and turning I appeal'd
To one that stood beside.

But she, with sick and scornful looks averse,
To her full height her stately stature draws ;
'My youth,' she said, 'was blasted with a curse :
This woman was the cause.

'I was cut off from hope in that sad place,
Which men call'd Aulis in those iron years :
My father held his hand upon his face ;
I, blinded with my tears,

'Still strove to speak: my voice was thick with sighs
As in a dream. Dimly I could descry
The stern black-bearded kings with wolfish eyes,
Waiting to see me die.

'The high masts flicker'd as they lay afloat ;
The crowds, the temples, waver'd, and the shore ;
The bright death quiver'd at the victim's throat ;
Touch'd ; and I knew no more.'

Whereto the other with a downward brow :

‘ I would the white cold heavy-plunging foam,
Whirl’d by the wind, had roll’d me deep below,
Then when I left my home.’

Her slow full words sank thro’ the silence drear,

As thunder-drops fall on a sleeping sea :
Sudden I heard a voice that cried, ‘ Come here,
That I may look on thee.’

I turning saw, throned on a flowery rise,

One sitting on a crimson scarf unroll’d ;
A queen, with swarthy cheeks and bold black eyes,
Brow-bound with burning gold.

She, flashing forth a haughty smile, began :

‘ I govern’d men by change, and so I sway’d
All moods. ’Tis long since I have seen a man.
Once, like the moon, I made

‘ The ever-shifting currents of the blood
According to my humour ebb and flow.

I have no men to govern in this wood :
That makes my only woe.

‘Nay—yet it chafes me that I could not bend
One will ; nor tame and tutor with mine eye
That dull cold-blooded Cæsar. Prythee, friend,
Where is Mark Antony ?

‘The man, my lover, with whom I rode sublime
On Fortune’s neck : we sat as God by God :
The Nilus would have risen before his time
And flooded at our nod.

‘We drank the Libyan Sun to sleep, and lit
Lamps which out-burn’d Canopus. O my life
In Egypt ! O the dalliance and the wit,
The flattery and the strife,

‘And the wild kiss, when fresh from war’s alarms,
My Hercules, my Roman Antony,
My mailed Bacchus leapt into my arms,
Contented there to die !

‘And there he died : and when I heard my name
Sigh’d forth with life I would not brook my fear
Of the other : with a worm I balk’d his fame.
What else was left ? look here !

(With that she tore her robe apart, and half
The polish'd argent of her breast to sight
Laid bare. Thereto she pointed with a laugh,
Showing the aspick's bite.)

'I died a Queen. The Roman soldier found
Me lying dead, my crown about my brows,
A name for ever!—lying robed and crown'd,
Worthy a Roman spouse.'

Her warbling voice, a lyre of widest range
Struck by all passion, did fall down and glance
From tone to tone, and glided thro' all change
Of liveliest utterance.

When she made pause I knew not for delight ;
Because with sudden motion from the ground
She raised her piercing orbs, and fill'd with light
The interval of sound.

Still with their fires Love tipt his keenest darts ;
As once they drew into two burning rings
All beams of Love, melting the mighty hearts
Of captains and of kings.

Slowly my sense undazzled. Then I heard
A noise of some one coming thro' the lawn,
And singing clearer than the crested bird
That claps his wings at dawn.

'The torrent brooks of hallow'd Israel
From craggy hollows pouring, late and soon,
Sound all night long, in falling thro' the dell,
Far-heard beneath the moon.

'The balmy moon of blessed Israel
Floods all the deep-blue gloom with beams divine :
All night the splinter'd crags that wall the dell
With spires of silver shine.'

As one that museth where broad sunshine laves
The lawn by some cathedral, thro' the door
Hearing the holy organ rolling waves
Of sound on roof and floor

Within, and anthem sung, is charm'd and tied
To where he stands,—so stood I, when that flow
Of music left the lips of her that died
To save her father's vow ;

The daughter of the warrior Gileadite,
A maiden pure ; as when she went along
From Mizpeh's tower'd gate with welcome light,
With timbrel and with song.

My words leapt forth : 'Heaven heads the count of
crimes

With that wild oath.' She render'd answer high :
'Not so, nor once alone ; a thousand times
I would be born and die.

'Single I grew, like some green plant, whose root
Creeps to the garden water-pipes beneath,
Feeding the flower ; but ere my flower to fruit
Changed, I was ripe for death.

'My God, my land, my father—these did move
Me from my bliss of life, that Nature gave,
Lower'd softly with a threefold cord of love
Down to a silent grave.

'And I went mourning, "No fair Hebrew boy
Shall smile away my maiden blame among
The Hebrew mothers"—emptied of all joy,
Leaving the dance and song,

‘ Leaving the olive-gardens far below,
Leaving the promise of my bridal bower,
The valleys of grape-loaded vines that glow
Beneath the battled tower.

‘ The light white cloud swam over us. Anon
We heard the lion roaring from his den ;
We saw the large white stars rise one by one,
Or, from the darken’d glen,

‘ Saw God divide the night with flying flame,
And thunder on the everlasting hills.
I heard Him, for He spake, and grief became
A solemn scorn of ills.

‘ When the next moon was roll’d into the sky,
Strength came to me that equall’d my desire
How beautiful a thing it was to die
For God and for my sire !

‘ It comforts me in this one thought to dwell,
That I subdued me to my father’s will ;
Because the kiss he gave me, ere I fell,
Sweetens the spirit still.

'Moreover it is written that my race
Hew'd Ammon, hip and thigh, from Aroer
On Arnon unto Minneth.' Here her face
Glow'd, as I look'd at her.

She lock'd her lips : she left me where I stood :
'Glory to God,' she sang, and past afar,
Thridding the sombre boskage of the wood,
Toward the morning-star.

Losing her carol I stood pensively,
As one that from a casement leans his head,
When midnight bells cease ringing suddenly,
And the old year is dead.

'Alas ! alas !' a low voice, full of care,
Murmur'd beside me : 'Turn and look on me :
I am that Rosamond, whom men call fair,
If what I was I be.

'Would I had been some maiden coarse and poor !
Oh me, that I should ever see the light !
Those dragon eyes of anger'd Eleanor
Do hunt me, day and night.'

She ceased in tears, fallen from hope
To whom the Egyptian : ' O, you
You should have clung to Fulvia's w
The dagger thro' her side.'

With that sharp sound the white c
beams,
Stol'n to my brain, dissolved the r
Of folded sleep. The captain of my
Ruled in the eastern sky.

Morn broaden'd on the borders of th
Ere I saw her, who clasp'd in her
Her murder'd father's head, or Joan
A light of ancient France ;

Or her who knew that Love can van
Who kneeling, with one arm abou
Drew forth the poison with her balm
Sweet as new buds in Spring.

No memory labours longer from the
Gold-mines of thought to lift the h
That glimpses, moving up, than I fro
To gather and tell o'er

Each little sound and sight. With what dull pain
Compass'd, how eagerly I sought to strike
Into that wondrous track of dreams again !
But no two dreams are like.

As when a soul laments, which hath been blest,
Desiring what is mingled with past years,
In yearnings that can never be exprest
By signs or groans or tears ;

Because all words, tho' cull'd with choicest art,
Failing to give the bitter of the sweet,
Wither beneath the palate, and the heart
Faints, faded by its heat.

THE BLACKBIRD

O BLACKBIRD ! sing me something well :
While all the neighbours shoot thee round,
I keep smooth plats of fruitful ground,
Where thou may'st warble, eat and dwell.

The espaliers and the standards all
Are thine ; the range of lawn and park :
The unnetted black-hearts ripen dark,
All thine, against the garden wall.

Yet, tho' I spared thee all the spring,
Thy sole delight is, sitting still,
With that gold dagger of thy bill
To fret the summer jenneting.

A golden bill ! the silver tongue,
Cold February loved, is dry :
Plenty corrupts the melody
That made thee famous once, when young :

And in the sultry garden-squares,
Now thy flute-notes are changed to coarse,
I hear thee not at all, or hoarse
As when a hawker hawks his wares.

Take warning ! he that will not sing
While yon sun prospers in the blue,
Shall sing for want, ere leaves are new,
Caught in the frozen palms of Spring.

THE DEATH OF THE OLD YEAR

FULL knee-deep lies the winter snow,
And the winter winds are wearily sighing :
Toll ye the church-bell sad and slow,
And tread softly and speak low,
For the old year lies a-dying.
 Old year, you must not die ;
 You came to us so readily,
 You lived with us so steadily,
 Old year, you shall not die.

He lieth still : he doth not move :
He will not see the dawn of day.
He hath no other life above.
He gave me a friend, and a true true-love,
And the New-year will take 'em away.
 Old year, you must not go ;
 So long as you have been with us,
 Such joy as you have seen with us,
 Old year, you shall not go.

He froth'd his bumpers to the brim ;
A jollier year we shall not see.
But tho' his eyes are waxing dim,
And tho' his foes speak ill of him,
He was a friend to me.

Old year, you shall not die ;
We did so laugh and cry with you,
I've half a mind to die with you,
Old year, if you must die.

He was full of joke and jest,
But all his merry quips are o'er.
To see him die, across the waste
His son and heir doth ride post-haste,
But he'll be dead before.

Every one for his own.
The night is starry and cold, my friend,
And the New-year blithe and bold, my friend,
Comes up to take his own.

How hard he breathes ! over the snow
I heard just now the crowing cock.
The shadows flicker to and fro :
The cricket chirps : the light burns low :
'Tis nearly twelve o'clock.

5 *The Death of the Old Year*

Shake hands, before you die.

Old year, we'll dearly rue for you :

• What is it we can do for you ?

Speak out before you die.

His face is growing sharp and thin.

Alack ! our friend is gone.

Close up his eyes : tie up his chin :

Step from the corpse, and let him in

That standeth there alone,

And waiteth at the door.

There's a new foot on the floor, my friend,

And a new face at the door, my friend,

A new face at the door.

TO J. S.

THE wind, that beats the mountain, blows
More softly round the open wold,
And gently comes the world to those
That are cast in gentle mould.

And me this knowledge bolder made,
Or else I had not dared to flow
In these words toward you, and invade
Even with a verse your holy woe.

'Tis strange that those we lean on most,
Those in whose laps our limbs are nursed,
Fall into shadow, soonest lost :
Those we love first are taken first.

God gives us love. Something to love
He lends us ; but, when love is grown
To ripeness, that on which it throve
Falls off, and love is left alone.

This is the curse of time. Alas !
In grief I am not all unlearn'd ;
Once thro' mine own doors Death did
One went, who never hath return

He will not smile—not speak to me
Once more. Two years his chain
Empty before us. That was he
Without whose life I had not been

Your loss is rarer ; for this star
Rose with you thro' a little arc
Of heaven, nor having wander'd far
Shot on the sudden into dark.

I knew your brother : his mute dust
I honour and his living worth :
A man more pure and bold and just
Was never born into the earth.

I have not look'd upon you nigh,
Since that dear soul hath fall'n as
Great Nature is more wise than I :
I will not tell you not to weep.

And tho' mine own eyes fill with dew,
 Drawn from the spirit thro' the brain,
I will not even preach to you,
 ' Weep, weeping dulls the inward pain.'

Let Grief be her own mistress still.
 She loveth her own anguish deep
More than much pleasure. Let her will
 Be done—to weep or not to weep.

I will not say, ' God's ordinance
 Of Death is blown in every wind ;'
For that is not a common chance
 That takes away a noble mind.

His memory long will live alone
 In all our hearts, as mournful light
That broods above the fallen sun,
 And dwells in heaven half the night.

Vain solace ! Memory standing near
 Cast down her eyes, and in her throat
Her voice seem'd distant, and a tear
 Dropt on the letters as I wrote.

I wrote I know not what. In truth,
How *should* I soothe you anyway,
Who miss the brother of your youth ?
Yet something I did wish to say :

For he too was a friend to me :
Both are my friends, and my true breast
Bleedeth for both ; yet it may be
That only silence suiteth best.

Words weaker than your grief would make
Grief more. 'Twere better I should cease
Although myself could almost take
The place of him that sleeps in peace.

Sleep sweetly, tender heart, in peace :
Sleep, holy spirit, blessed soul,
While the stars burn, the moons increase,
And the great ages onward roll.

Sleep till the end, true soul and sweet.
Nothing comes to thee new or strange.
Sleep full of rest from head to feet ;
Lie still, dry dust, secure of change.

ON A MOURNER

I

NATURE, so far as in her lies,
 Imitates God, and turns her face
 To every land beneath the skies,
 Counts nothing that she meets with base,
 But lives and loves in every place ;

II

Fills out the homely quickset-screens,
 And makes the purple lilac ripe,
 Steps from her airy hill, and greens
 The swamp, where humm'd the dropping
 snipe,
 With moss and braided marish-pipe ;

III

And on thy heart a finger lays,
 Saying, ' Beat quicker, for the time
 Is pleasant, and the woods and ways
 Are pleasant, and the beech and lime
 Put forth and feel a gladder clime.'

IV

And murmurs of a deeper voice,
Going before to some far shrine,
Teach that sick heart the stronger choice,
Till all thy life one way incline
With one wide Will that closes thine.

V

And when the zoning eve has died
Where yon dark valleys wind forlorn,
Come Hope and Memory, spouse and bride,
From out the borders of the morn,
With that fair child betwixt them born.

VI

And when no mortal motion jars
The blackness round the tombling sod,
Thro' silence and the trembling stars
Comes Faith from tracts no feet have trod,
And Virtue, like a household god

VII

Promising empire ; such as those
Once heard at dead of night to greet
Troy's wandering prince, so that he rose
With sacrifice, while all the fleet
Had rest by stony hills of Crete.

YOU ask me, why, tho' ill at ease,
 Within this region I subsist,
 Whose spirits falter in the mist,
And languish for the purple seas.

It is the land that freemen till,
 That sober-suited Freedom chose,
 The land, where girt with friends or foes
A man may speak the thing he will ;

A land of settled government,
 A land of just and old renown,
 Where Freedom slowly broadens down
From precedent to precedent :

Where faction seldom gathers head,
 But by degrees to fullness wrought,
 The strength of some diffusive thought
Hath time and space to work and spread.

Should banded unions persecute
 Opinion, and induce a time
 When single thought is civil crime,
And individual freedom mute ;

34 *'Of old sat Freedom on the Heights'*

Tho' Power should make from land to land
 The name of Britain trebly great—
 Tho' every channel of the State
Should fill and choke with golden sand—

Yet waft me from the harbour-mouth,
 Wild wind ! I seek a warmer sky,
 And I will see before I die
The palms and temples of the South.

OF old sat Freedom on the heights,
 The thunders breaking at her feet :
Above her shook the starry lights :
 She heard the torrents meet.

There in her place she did rejoice,
 Self-gather'd in her prophet-mind,
But fragments of her mighty voice
 Came rolling on the wind.

Then stept she down thro' town and field
 To mingle with the human race,
And part by part to men reveal'd
 The fullness of her face—

Grave mother of majestic works,
From her isle-altar gazing down,
Who, God-like, grasps the triple forks,
And, King-like, wears the crown :

Her open eyes desire the truth.
The wisdom of a thousand years
Is in them. May perpetual youth
Keep dry their light from tears ;

That her fair form may stand and shine,
Make bright our days and light our dreams,
Turning to scorn with lips divine
The falsehood of extremes !

LOVE thou thy land, with love far-brought
From out the storied Past, and used
Within the Present, but transfused
Thro' future time by power of thought.

True love turn'd round on fixed poles,
Love, that endures not sordid ends,
For English natures, freemen, friends,
Thy brothers and immortal souls.

But pamper not a hasty time,
Nor feed with crude imaginings
The herd, wild hearts and feeble wings
That every sophister can lime.

Deliver not the tasks of might
To weakness, neither hide the ray
From those, not blind who wait for day,
Tho' sitting girt with doubtful light.

Make knowledge circle with the winds ;
But let her herald, Reverence, fly
Before her to whatever sky
Bear seed of men and growth of minds.

Watch what main-currents draw the years :
Cut Prejudice against the grain :
But gentle words are always gain :
Regard the weakness of thy peers :

Nor toil for title, place, or touch
Of pension, neither count on praise :
It grows to guerdon after-days :
Nor deal in watch-words overmuch :

Not clinging to some ancient saw ;
Not master'd by some modern term ;
Not swift nor slow to change, but firm :
And in its season bring the law ;

That from Discussion's lip may fall
With Life, that, working strongly, binds—
Set in all lights by many minds,
To close the interests of all.

For Nature also, cold and warm,
And moist and dry, devising long,
Thro' many agents making strong,
Matures the individual form.

Meet is it changes should control
Our being, lest we rust in ease.
We all are changed by still degrees,
All but the basis of the soul.

So let the change which comes be free
To ingroove itself with that which flies,
And work, a joint of state, that plies
Its office, moved with sympathy.

'Love Thou Thy Land'

A saying hard to shape in act ;
For all the past of Time reveals
A bridal dawn of thunder-peals,
Wherever Thought hath wedded Fact.

Ev'n now we hear with inward strife
A motion toiling in the gloom—
The Spirit of the years to come
Yearning to mix himself with Life.

A slow-develop'd strength awaits
Completion in a painful school ;
Phantoms of other forms of rule,
New Majesties of mighty States—

The warders of the growing hour,
But vague in vapour, hard to mark ;
And round them sea and air are dark
With great contrivances of Power.

Of many changes, aptly join'd,
Is bodied forth the second whole.
Regard gradation, lest the soul
Of Discord race the rising wind ;

A wind to puff your idol-fires,
And heap their ashes on the head ;
To shame the boast so often made,
That we are wiser than our sires.

Oh yet, if Nature's evil star
Drive men in manhood, as in youth,
To follow flying steps of Truth
Across the brazen bridge of war—

If New and Old, disastrous feud,
Must ever shock, like armed foes,
And this be true, till Time shall close,
That Principles are rain'd in blood ;

Not yet the wise of heart would cease
To hold his hope thro' shame and guilt,
But with his hand against the hilt,
Would pace the troubled land, like Peace ;

Not less, tho' dogs of Faction bay,
Would serve his kind in deed and word,
Certain, if knowledge bring the sword,
That knowledge takes the sword away—

'Love Thou Thy Land'

Would love the gleams of good that broke
From either side, nor veil his eyes :
And if some dreadful need should rise
Would strike, and firmly, and one stroke :

To morrow yet would reap to-day,
As we bear blossom of the dead ;
Earn well the thrifty months, nor wed
Raw Haste, half-sister to Delay.

ENGLAND AND AMERICA IN 1782

O THOU, that sendest out the man
To rule by land and sea,
Strong mother of a Lion-line,
Be proud of those strong sons of thine
Who wrench'd their rights from thee !

What wonder, if in noble heat
Those men thine arms withstood,
Retaught the lesson thou hadst taught,
And in thy spirit with thee fought—
Who sprang from English blood !

But Thou rejoice with liberal joy,
Lift up thy rocky face,
And shatter, when the storms are black,
In many a streaming torrent back,
The seas that shock thy base !

Whatever harmonies of law
The growing world assume,
Thy work is thine—The single note
From that deep chord which Hampden smote
Will vibrate to the doom.

THE GOOSE

I KNEW an old wife lean and poor,
Her rags scarce held together ;
There strode a stranger to the door,
And it was windy weather.

He held a goose upon his arm,
He utter'd rhyme and reason,
' Here, take the goose, and keep you warm,
It is a stormy season.'

She caught the white goose by the leg,
A goose—'twas no great matter.
The goose let fall a golden egg
With cackle and with clatter.

She dropt the goose, and caught the pelf,
And ran to tell her neighbours ;
And bless'd herself, and cursed herself,
And rested from her labours.

And feeding high, and living soft,
Grew plump and able-bodied ;
Until the grave churchwarden doff'd,
The parson smirk'd and nodded.

So sitting, served by man and maid,
She felt her heart grow prouder :
But ah ! the more the white goose laid
It clack'd and cackled louder.

It clutter'd here, it chuckled there ;
It stirr'd the old wife's mettle :
She shifted in her elbow-chair,
And hurl'd the pan and kettle.

'A quinsy choke thy cursed note !'
Then wax'd her anger stronger.
'Go, take the goose, and wring her throat,
I will not bear it longer.'

Then yelp'd the cur, and yawl'd the cat ;
Ran Gaffer, stumbled Gammer.
The goose flew this way and flew that,
And fill'd the house with clamour.

As head and heels upon the floor
They flounder'd all together,

There strode a stranger to the door,
And it was windy weather :

He took the goose upon his arm,
He utter'd words of scorning ;
' So keep you cold, or keep you warm,
It is a stormy morning.'

The wild wind rang from park and plain,
And round the attics rumbled,
Till all the tables danced again,
And half the chimneys tumbled.

The glass blew in, the fire blew out,
The blast was hard and harder.
Her cap blew off, her gown blew up,
And a whirlwind clear'd the larder :

And while on all sides breaking loose
Her household fled the danger,
Quoth she, ' The Devil take the goose,
And God forget the stranger !'

ENGLISH IDYLS

AND OTHER POEMS

THE EPIC

AT Francis Allen's on the Christmas-eve,—
The game of forfeits done—the girls all kiss'd
Beneath the sacred bush and past away—
The parson Holmes, the poet Everard Hall,
The host, and I sat round the wassail-bowl,
Then half-way ebb'd : and there we held a talk,
How all the old honour had from Christmas gone,
Or gone, or dwindled down to some odd games
In some odd nooks like this ; till I, tired out
With cutting eights that day upon the pond,
Where, three times slipping from the outer edge,
I bump'd the ice into three several stars,
Fell in a doze ; and half-awake I heard
The parson taking wide and wider sweeps,
Now harping on the church-commissioners,
Now hawking at Geology and schism :

Until I woke, and found him settled down
Upon the general decay of faith
Right thro' the world, 'at home was little left,
And none abroad : there was no anchor, none,
To hold by.' Francis, laughing, clapt his hand
On Everard's shoulder, with 'I hold by him.'
'And I,' quoth Everard, 'by the wassail-bowl.'
'Why yes,' I said, 'we knew your gift that way
At college : but another which you had,
I mean of verse (for so we held it then),
What came of that?' 'You know,' said Frank, 'he
burnt

His epic, his King Arthur, some twelve books'—
And then to me demanding why? 'Oh, sir,
He thought that nothing new was said, or else
Something so said 'twas nothing—that a truth
Looks freshest in the fashion of the day :
God knows : he has a mint of reasons : ask.
It pleased *me* well enough.' 'Nay, nay,' said Hall,
'Why take the style of those heroic times?
For nature brings not back the Mastodon,
Nor we those times ; and why should any man
Remodel models? these twelve books of mine
Were faint Homeric echoes, nothing-worth,
'Mere chaff and draff, much better burnt.' 'But I,'

That hears the corn-bin open, prick'd my ears ;
For I remember'd Everard's college fame
When we were Freshmen : then at my request
He brought it ; and the poet little urged,
But with some prelude of disparagement,
Read, mouthing out his hollow oes and aes,
Deep-chested music, and to this result.

MORTE D'ARTHUR

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd
Among the mountains by the winter sea ;
Until King Arthur's table, man by man,
Had fallen in Lyonesse about their Lord,
King Arthur : then, because his wound was deep,
The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights,
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
A broken chancel with a broken cross,
That stood on a dark strait of barren land.
On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
Lay a great water, and the moon was full.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere :
'The sequel of to-day unsolders all
The goodliest fellowship of famous knights
Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep
They sleep—the men I loved. I think that we
Shall never more, at any future time,

Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,
Walking about the gardens and the halls
Of Camelot, as in the days that were.
I perish by this people which I made,—
Tho' Merlin sware that I should come again
To rule once more—but let what will be, be,
I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm
That without help I cannot last till morn.
Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,
Which was my pride : for thou rememberest how
In those old days, one summer noon, an arm
Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
Holding the sword—and how I row'd across
And took it, and have worn it, like a king :
And, wheresoever I am sung or told
In aftertime, this also shall be known :
But now delay not : take Excalibur,
And fling him far into the middle mere :
Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring me word.'

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere :
'It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus,
Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the helm.
A little thing may harm a wounded man.
Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,

Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word.'

So saying, from the ruin'd shrine he stept
And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,
Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,
Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang
Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He, stepping down
By zig-zag paths, and juts of pointed rock,
Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,
And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,
Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth
And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt :
For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,
Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work
Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long
That both his eyes were dazzled, as he stood,
This way and that dividing the swift mind,
In act to throw : but at the last it seem'd
Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd
There in the many-knotted waterflags,
That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.
So strode he back slow to the wounded King.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere :
'Hast thou perform'd my mission which I gave ?
What is it thou hast seen ? or what hast heard ?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
' I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
And the wild water lapping on the crag.'

To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale :
' Thou hast betray'd thy nature and thy name,
Not rendering true answer, as beseem'd
Thy fēalty, nor like a noble knight :
For surer sign had follow'd, either hand,
Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.
This is a shameful thing for men to lie.
Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again
As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing
I bad thee, watch, and lightly bring me word.'

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time
Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere,
Counting the dewy pebbles, fix'd in thought ;
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,
How curiously and strangely chased, he smote
His palms together, and he cried aloud,

' And if indeed I cast the brand away,
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,
Should thus be lost for ever from the earth,
Which might have pleased the eyes of many men.
What good should follow this, if this were done ?
What harm, undone ? deep harm to disobey,

Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.
Were it well to obey then, if a king demand
An act unprofitable, against himself?
The King is sick, and knows not what he does.
What record, or what relic of my lord
Should be to aftertime, but empty breath
And rumours of a doubt? but were this kept,
Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings,
Some one might show it at a joust of arms,
Saying, "King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,
Wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake.
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps
Upon the hidden bases of the hills."
So might some old man speak in the aftertime
To all the people, winning reverence.
But now much honour and much fame were lost.

So spake he, clouded with his own conceit,
And hid Excalibur the second time,
And so strode back slow to the wounded King.

Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily:
'What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?
And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
'I heard the water lapping on the crag,
And the long ripple washing in the reeds.'

To whom replied King Arthur, much in wrath

'Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,
Unknightly, traitor-hearted ! Woe is me !
Authority forgets a dying king,
Laid widow'd of the power in his eye
That bow'd the will. I see thee what thou art,
For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,
In whom should meet the offices of all,
Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt ;
Either from lust of gold, or like a girl
Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.
Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
And the third time may prosper, get thee hence :
But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
I will arise and slay thee with my hands.'

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,
And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged
Among the bulrush-beds, and clutch'd the sword,
And strongly wheel'd and threw it. The great brand
Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,
And flashing round and round, and whirl'd in an arch,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles of winter shock
By night, with noises of the northern sea.
So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur :
But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm

Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.
And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker breath
'Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.
Speak out : what is it thou hast heard, or seen?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
'Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems
Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men,
So great a miracle as yonder hilt.
Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him ;
But when I look'd again, behold an arm,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
That caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.'

And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard :
'My end draws nigh ; 'tis time that I were gone.
Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight,
And bear me to the margin ; yet I fear
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die.'

So saying, from the pavement he half rose,
Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,

And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes
As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere
Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears,
And would have spoken, but he found not words,
Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,
O'er both his shoulders drew the languid hands,
And rising bore him thro' the place of tombs.

But, as he walk'd, King Arthur panted hard,
Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
When all the house is mute. So sigh'd the King,
Muttering and murmuring at his ear, 'Quick, quick !
I fear it is too late, and I shall die.'

But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,
Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walk'd,
Larger than human on the frozen hills.
He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
Before. His own thought drove him, like a goad.
Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves
And barren chasms, and all to left and right
The bare black cliff clang'd round him, as he based
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels—
And on a sudden, lo ! the level lake,
And the long glories of the winter moon.

Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,

Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
Beneath them ; and descending they were ware
That all the decks were dense with stately forms
Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—by these
Three Queens with crowns of gold—and from the
 rose

A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars,
And, as it were one voice an agony
Of lamentation, like a wind, that shrills
All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
Or hath come, since the making of the world.

Then murmur'd Arthur, 'Place me in the barge,'
And to the barge they came. There those three Queen
Put forth their hands, and took the King, and wept.
But she, that rose the tallest of them all
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,
And loosed the shatter'd casque, and chafed his hand:
And call'd him by his name, complaining loud,
And dropping bitter tears against his brow
Striped with dark blood : for all his face was white
And colourless, and like the wither'd moon
Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east ;
And all his greaves and cuisses dash'd with drops
Of onset ; and the light and lustrous curls—
That made his forehead like a rising sun

High from the daïs-throne—were parch'd with dust ;
Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,
Mix'd with the knightly growth that fringed his lips.
So like a shatter'd column lay the King ;
Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest,
From spur to plume a star of tournament,
Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and charged
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings.

Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere,
'Ah ! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go ?
Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes ?
For now I see the true old times are dead,
When every morning brought a noble chance,
And every chance brought out a noble knight.
Such times have been not since the light that led
The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.
But now the whole ROUND TABLE is dissolved
Which was an image of the mighty world ;
And I, the last, go forth companionless,
And the days darken round me, and the years,
Among new men, strange faces, other minds.'

And slowly answered Arthur from the barge :
'The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils Himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.

Comfort thyself : what comfort is in me ?
I have lived my life, and that which I have done
May He within Himself make pure ! but thou,
If thou shouldst never see my face again,
Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them fri
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.
But now farewell. I am going a long way
With these thou seest—if indeed I go—
(For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)
To the island-valley of Avilion ;
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly ; but it lies
Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard-lawns
And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound.'

So said he, and the barge with oar and sail
Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted swan
That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,

her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
warthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere
ing many memories, till the hull
one black dot against the verge of dawn,
the mere the wailing died away.

ended Hall, and our last light, that long
ink'd and threaten'd darkness, flared and fell :
ch the Parson, sent to sleep with sound,
aked with silence, grunted 'Good !' but we
ot : it was the tone with which he read—
s some modern touches here and there
n'd it from the charge of nothingness—
: we loved the man, and prized his work ;
r not : but we sitting, as I said,
ck crew loud ; as at that time of year
sty bird takes every hour for dawn :
Francis, muttering, like a man ill-used,
: now—that's nothing !' drew a little back,
rove his heel into the smoulder'd log,
ent a blast of sparkles up the flue :
o to bed ; where yet in sleep I seem'd
l with Arthur under looming shores,
fter point ; till on to dawn, when dreams

Begin to feel the truth and stir of day,
To me, methought, who waited with a crowd,
There came a bark that, blowing forward, bore
King Arthur, like a modern gentleman
Of stateliest port ; and all the people cried,
'Arthur is come again : he cannot die.'
Then those that stood upon the hills behind
Repeated—'Come again, and thrice as fair ;'
And, further inland, voices echo'd—'Come
With all good things, and war shall be no more.'
At this a hundred bells began to peal,
That with the sound I woke, and heard indeed
The clear church-bells ring in the Christmas-morn.

THE GARDENER'S DAUGHTER ;
OR, THE PICTURES

THIS morning is the morning of the day,
When I and Eustace from the city went
To see the Gardener's Daughter ; I and he,
Brothers in Art ; a friendship so complete
Portion'd in halves between us, that we grew
The fable of the city where we dwelt.

My Eustace might have sat for Hercules ;
So muscular he spread, so broad of breast.
He, by some law that holds in love, and draws
The greater to the lesser, long desired
A certain miracle of symmetry,
A miniature of loveliness, all grace
Summ'd up and closed in little ;—Juliet, she
So light of foot, so light of spirit—oh, she
To me myself, for some three careless moons,
The summer pilot of an empty heart
Unto the shores of nothing ! Know you not

Such touches are but embassies of love,
To tamper with the feelings, ere he found
Empire for life? but Eustace painted her,
And said to me, she sitting with us then,
'When will *you* paint like this?' and I replied-
(My words were half in earnest, half in jest,)
'Tis not your work, but Love's. Love, unper-
A more ideal Artist he than all,
Came, drew your pencil from you, made those
Darker than darkest pansies, and that hair
More black than ashbuds in the front of March
And Juliet answer'd laughing, 'Go and see
The Gardener's daughter: trust me, after that,
You scarce can fail to match his masterpiece.'
And up we rose, and on the spur we went.

Not wholly in the busy world, nor quite
Beyond it, blooms the garden that I love.
News from the humming city comes to it
In sound of funeral or of marriage bells;
And, sitting muffled in dark leaves, you hear
The windy clanging of the minster clock;
Although between it and the garden lies
A league of grass, wash'd by a slow broad stream
That, stirr'd with languid pulses of the oar,
Waves all its lazy lilies, and creeps on,

Barge-laden, to three arches of a bridge
Crown'd with the minster-towers.

The fields between

Are dewy-fresh, browsed by deep-udder'd kine,
And all about the large lime feathers low,
The lime a summer home of murmurous wings.

In that still place she, hoarded in herself,
Grew, seldom seen ; not less among us lived
Her fame from lip to lip. Who had not heard
Of Rose, the Gardener's daughter? Where was he,
So blunt in memory, so old at heart,
At such a distance from his youth in grief,
That, having seen, forgot? The common mouth,
So gross to express delight, in praise of her
Grew oratory. Such a lord is Love,
And Beauty such a mistress of the world.

And if I said that Fancy, led by Love,
Would play with flying forms and images,
Yet this is also true, that, long before
I look'd upon her, when I heard her name
My heart was like a prophet to my heart,
And told me I should love. A crowd of hopes,
That sought to sow themselves like winged seeds,
Born out of everything I heard and saw,
Flutter'd about my senses and my soul ;

And vague desires, like fitful blasts of balm
To one that travels quickly, made the air
Of Life delicious, and all kinds of thought,
That verged upon them, sweeter than the dream
Dream'd by a happy man, when the dark East,
Unseen, is brightening to his bridal morn.

And sure this orbit of the memory folds
For ever in itself the day we went
To see her. All the land in flowery squares,
Beneath a broad and equal-blowing wind,
Smelt of the coming summer, as one large cloud
Drew downward : but all else of heaven was pure
Up to the Sun, and May from verge to verge,
And May with me from head to heel. And now,
As tho' 'twere yesterday, as tho' it were
The hour just flown, that morn with all its sound,
(For those old Mays had thrice the life of these,)
Rings in mine ears. The steer forgot to graze,
And, where the hedge-row cuts the pathway, stood,
Leaning his horns into the neighbour field,
And lowing to his fellows. From the woods
Came voices of the well-contented doves.
The lark could scarce get out his notes for joy,
But shook his song together as he near'd
His happy home, the ground. To left and right,

The cuckoo told his name to all the hills ;
The mellow ouzel fluted in the elm ;
The redcap whistled ; and the nightingale
Sang loud, as tho' he were the bird of day.

And Eustace turn'd, and smiling said to me,
'Hear how the bushes echo ! by my life,
These birds have joyful thoughts. Think you they
sing

Like poets, from the vanity of song ?
Or have they any sense of why they sing ?
And would they praise the heavens for what they have ?'
And I made answer, 'Were there nothing else
For which to praise the heavens but only love,
That only love were cause enough for praise.'

Lightly he laugh'd, as one that read my thought,
And on we went ; but ere an hour had pass'd,
We reach'd a meadow slanting to the North ;
Down which a well-worn pathway courted us
To one green wicket in a privet hedge ;
This, yielding, gave into a grassy walk
Thro' crowded lilac-ambush trimly pruned ;
And one warm gust, full-fed with perfume, blew
Beyond us, as we enter'd in the cool.
The garden stretches southward. In the midst
A cedar spread his dark-green layers of shade.

The garden-glasses glanced, and momentarily
The twinkling laurel scatter'd silver lights.

'Eustace,' I said, 'this wonder keeps the house.'
He nodded, but a moment afterwards
He cried, 'Look ! look !' Before he ceased I turn'
And, ere a star can wink, beheld her there.

For up the porch there grew an Eastern rose,
That, flowering high, the last night's gale had caught
And blown across the walk. One arm aloft—
Gown'd in pure white, that fitted to the shape—
Holding the bush, to fix it back, she stood,
A single stream of all her soft brown hair
Pour'd on one side : the shadow of the flowers
Stole all the golden gloss, and, wavering
Lovingly lower, trembled on her waist—
Ah, happy shade—and still went wavering down,
But, ere it touch'd a foot, that might have danced
The greensward into greener circles, dipt,
And mix'd with shadows of the common ground !
But the full day dwelt on her brows, and sunn'd
Her violet eyes, and all her Hebe bloom,
And doubled his own warmth against her lips,
And on the bounteous wave of such a breast
As never pencil drew. Half light, half shade,
She stood, a sight to make an old man young.

So rapt, we near'd the house ; but she, a Rose
In roses, mingled with her fragrant toil,
Nor heard us come, nor from her tendance turn'd
Into the world without ; till close at hand,
And almost ere I knew mine own intent,
This murmur broke the stillness of that air
Which brooded round about her :

‘ Ah, one rose,
One rose, but one, by those fair fingers cull'd,
Were worth a hundred kisses press'd on lips
Less exquisite than thine.’

She look'd : but all
Suffused with blushes—neither self-possess'd
Nor startled, but betwixt this mood and that,
Divided in a graceful quiet—paused,
And dropt the branch she held, and turning, wound
Her looser hair in braid, and stirr'd her lips
For some sweet answer, tho' no answer came,
Nor yet refused the rose, but granted it,
And moved away, and left me, statue-like,
In act to render thanks.

I, that whole day,
Saw her no more, altho' I linger'd there
Till every daisy slept, and Love's white star
Beam'd thro' the thicken'd cedar in the dusk.

So home we went, and all the livelong way
With solemn gibe did Eustace banter me.
'Now,' said he, 'will you climb the top of Art.
You cannot fail but work in hues to dim
The Titianic Flora. Will you match
My Juliet? you, not you,—the Master, Love,
A more ideal Artist he than all.'

So home I went, but could not sleep for joy,
Reading her perfect features in the gloom,
Kissing the rose she gave me o'er and o'er,
And shaping faithful record of the glance
That graced the giving—such a noise of life
Swarm'd in the golden present, such a voice
Call'd to me from the years to come, and such
A length of bright horizon rimm'd the dark.
And all that night I heard the watchman peal
The sliding season : all that night I heard
The heavy clocks knolling the drowsy hours.
The drowsy hours, dispensers of all good,
O'er the mute city stole with folded wings,
Distilling odours on me as they went
To greet their fairer sisters of the East.

Love at first sight, first-born, and heir to all,
Made this night thus. Henceforward squall nor :
Could keep me from that Eden where she dwelt.

Light pretexts drew me ; sometimes a Dutch love
For tulips ; then for roses, moss or musk,
To grace my city rooms ; or fruits and cream
Served in the weeping elm ; and more and more
A word could bring the colour to my cheek ;
A thought would fill my eyes with happy dew ;
Love trebled life within me, and with each
The year increased.

The daughters of the year,
One after one, thro' that still garden pass'd ;
Each garlanded with her peculiar flower
Danced into light, and died into the shade ;
And each in passing touch'd with some new grace
Or seem'd to touch her, so that day by day,
Like one that never can be wholly known,
Her beauty grew ; till Autumn brought an hour
For Eustace, when I heard his deep 'I will,'
Breathed, like the covenant of a God, to hold
From thence thro' all the worlds : but I rose up
Full of his bliss, and following her dark eyes
Felt earth as air beneath me, till I reach'd
The wicket-gate, and found her standing there.

There sat we down upon a garden mound,
Two mutually enfolded ; Love, the third,
Between us, in the circle of his arms

Enwound us both ; and over many a range
Of waning lime the gray cathedral towers,
Across a hazy glimmer of the west,
Reveal'd their shining windows : from them clash'
The bells ; we listen'd ; with the time we play'd,
We spoke of other things ; we coursed about
The subject most at heart, more near and near,
Like doves about a dovecote, wheeling round
The central wish, until we settled there.

Then, in that time and place, I spoke to her,
Requiring, tho' I knew it was mine own,
Yet for the pleasure that I took to hear,
Requiring at her hand the greatest gift,
A woman's heart, the heart of her I loved ;
And in that time and place she answer'd me,
And in the compass of three little words,
More musical than ever came in one,
The silver fragments of a broken voice,
Made me most happy, faltering, ' I am thine.'

Shall I cease here ? Is this enough to say
That my desire, like all strongest hopes,
By its own energy fulfill'd itself,
Merged in completion ? Would you learn at full
How passion rose thro' circumstantial grades
Beyond all grades develop'd ? and indeed

I had not staid so long to tell you all,
But while I mused came Memory with sad eyes,
Holding the folded annals of my youth ;
And while I mused, Love with knit brows went by,
And with a flying finger swept my lips,
And spake, ' Be wise : not easily forgiven
Are those, who setting wide the doors that bar
The secret bridal chambers of the heart,
Let in the day.' Here, then, my words have end.

Yet might I tell of meetings, of farewells—
Of that which came between, more sweet than each,
In whispers, like the whispers of the leaves
That tremble round a nightingale—in sighs
Which perfect Joy, perplex'd for utterance,
Stole from her sister Sorrow. Might I not tell
Of difference, reconcilment, pledges given,
And vows, where there was never need of vows,
And kisses, where the heart on one wild leap
Hung tranced from all pulsation, as above
The heavens between their fairy fleeces pale
Sow'd all their mystic gulfs with fleeting stars ;
Or while the balmy glooming, crescent-lit,
Spread the light haze along the river-shores,
And in the hollows ; or as once we met
Unheedful, tho' beneath a whispering rain

Night slid down one long stream of sighing wind,
And in her bosom bore the baby, Sleep.


But this whole hour your eyes have been intent
On that veil'd picture—veil'd, for what it holds
May not be dwelt on by the common day.
This prelude has prepared thee. Raise thy soul ;
Make thine heart ready with thine eyes : the time
Is come to raise the veil.

Behold her there,
As I beheld her ere she knew my heart,
My first, last love ; the idol of my youth,
The darling of my manhood, and, alas !
Now the most blessed memory of mine age.

DORA

WITH farmer Allan at the farm abode
William and Dora. William was his son,
And she his niece. He often look'd at them,
And often thought, 'I'll make them man and wife.'
Now Dora felt her uncle's will in all,
And yearn'd toward William ; but the youth, because
He had been always with her in the house,
Thought not of Dora.

Then there came a day
When Allan call'd his son, and said, ' My son :
I married late, but I would wish to see
My grandchild on my knees before I die :
And I have set my heart upon a match.
Now therefore look to Dora ; she is well
To look to ; thrifty too beyond her age.
She is my brother's daughter : he and I
Had once hard words, and parted, and he died



In foreign lands ; but for his sake I bred
His daughter Dora : take her for your wife ;
For I have wish'd this marriage, night and day
For many years.' But William answer'd short
'I cannot marry Dora ; by my life,
I will not marry Dora.' Then the old man
Was wroth, and doubled up his hands, and said
'You will not, boy ! you dare to answer thus !
But in my time a father's word was law,
And so it shall be now for me. Look to it ;
Consider, William : take a month to think,
And let me have an answer to my wish ;
Or, by the Lord that made me, you shall pack,
And never more darken my doors again.'
But William answer'd madly ; bit his lips,
And broke away. The more he look'd at her
The less he liked her ; and his ways were harsh
But Dora bore them meekly. Then before
The month was out he left his father's house,
And hired himself to work within the fields ;
And half in love, half spite, he woo'd and wed
A labourer's daughter, Mary Morrison.

Then, when the bells were ringing, Allan call
His niece and said : 'My girl, I love you well ;
But if you speak with him that was my son,

Or change a word with her he calls his wife,
My home is none of yours. My will is law.'
And Dora promised, being meek. She thought,
'It cannot be : my uncle's mind will change !'

And days went on, and there was born a boy
To William ; then distresses came on him ;
And day by day he pass'd his father's gate,
Heart-broken, and his father help'd him not.
But Dora stored what little she could save,
And sent it them by stealth, nor did they know
Who sent it ; till at last a fever seized
On William, and in harvest time he died.

Then Dora went to Mary. Mary sat
And look'd with tears upon her boy, and thought
Hard things of Dora. Dora came and said :

'I have obey'd my uncle until now,
And I have sinn'd, for it was all thro' me
This evil came on William at the first.
But, Mary, for the sake of him that's gone,
And for your sake, the woman that he chose,
And for this orphan, I am come to you :
You know there has not been for these five years
So full a harvest : let me take the boy,
And I will set him in my uncle's eye
Among the wheat ; that when his heart is glad

Of the full harvest, he may see the boy,
And bless him for the sake of him that's gone

And Dora took the child, and went her way
Across the wheat, and sat upon a mound
That was unsown, where many poppies grew
Far off the farmer came into the field
And spied her not ; for none of all his men
Dare tell him Dora waited with the child ;
And Dora would have risen and gone to him
But her heart fail'd her ; and the reapers reaped
And the sun fell, and all the land was dark.

But when the morrow came, she rose and
The child once more, and sat upon the mound
And made a little wreath of all the flowers
That grew about, and tied it round his hat
To make him pleasing in her uncle's eye.
Then when the farmer pass'd into the field
He spied her, and he left his men at work,
And came and said : ' Where were you yesternight
Whose child is that ? What are you doing here ?
So Dora cast her eyes upon the ground,
And answer'd softly, ' This is William's child
' And did I not,' said Allan, ' did I not
Forbid you, Dora ? ' Dora said again :
' Do with me as you will, but take the child,

And bless him for the sake of him that's gone !'
And Allan said, 'I see it is a trick
Got up betwixt you and the woman there.
I must be taught my duty, and by you !
You knew my word was law, and yet you dared
To slight it. Well—for I will take the boy ;
But go you hence, and never see me more.'

So saying, he took the boy that cried aloud
And struggled hard. The wreath of flowers fell
At Dora's feet. She bow'd upon her hands,
And the boy's cry came to her from the field,
More and more distant. She bow'd down her head,
Remembering the day when first she came,
And all the things that had been. She bow'd down
And wept in secret ; and the reapers reap'd,
And the sun fell, and all the land was dark.

Then Dora went to Mary's house, and stood
Upon the threshold. Mary saw the boy
Was not with Dora. She broke out in praise
To God, that help'd her in her widowhood.
And Dora said, 'My uncle took the boy ;
But, Mary, let me live and work with you :
He says that he will never see me more.'
Then answer'd Mary, 'This shall never be,
That thou shouldst take my trouble on thyself :

And, now I think, he shall not have the boy,
For he will teach him hardness, and to slight
His mother ; therefore thou and I will go,
And I will have my boy, and bring him home ;
And I will beg of him to take thee back :
But if he will not take thee back again,
Then thou and I will live within one house,
And work for William's child, until he grows
Of age to help us.'

So the women kiss'd
Each other, and set out, and reach'd the farm.
The door was off the latch : they peep'd, and saw
The boy set up betwixt his grandsire's knees,
Who thrust him in the hollows of his arm,
And clapt him on the hands and on the cheeks,
Like one that loved him : and the lad stretch'd out
And babbled for the golden seal, that hung
From Allan's watch, and sparkled by the fire.
Then they came in : but when the boy beheld
His mother, he cried out to come to her :
And Allan set him down, and Mary said :
' O Father !—if you let me call you so—
I never came a-begging for myself,
Or William, or this child ; but now I come
For Dora : take her back ; she loves you well.

O Sir, when William died, he died at peace
With all men ; for I ask'd him, and he said,
He could not ever rue his marrying me—
I had been a patient wife : but, Sir, he said
That he was wrong to cross his father thus :
“God bless him!” he said, “and may he never
know

The troubles I have gone thro’!” Then he turn'd
His face and pass'd—unhappy that I am !
But now, Sir, let me have my boy, for you
Will make him hard, and he will learn to slight
His father's memory ; and take Dora back,
And let all this be as it was before.'

So Mary said, and Dora hid her face
By Mary. There was silence in the room ;
And all at once the old man burst in sobs :—

‘I have been to blame—to blame. I have kill'd my
son.

I have kill'd him—but I loved him—my dear son.
May God forgive me !—I have been to blame.
Kiss me, my children.'

Then they clung about
The old man's neck, and kiss'd him many times.
And all the man was broken with remorse ;
And all his love came back a hundredfold ;

And for three hours he sobb'd o'er William's child
Thinking of William.

So those four abode
Within one house together ; and as years
Went forward, Mary took another mate ;
But Dora lived unmarried till her death.

AUDLEY COURT

'THE Bull, the Fleece are cramm'd, and not a room
For love or money. Let us picnic there
At Audley Court.'

I spoke, while Audley feast
Humm'd like a hive all round the narrow quay,
To Francis, with a basket on his arm,
To Francis just alighted from the boat,
And breathing of the sea. 'With all my heart,'
Said Francis. Then we shoulder'd thro' the swarm,
And rounded by the stillness of the beach
To where the bay runs up its latest horn.

We left the dying ebb that faintly lipp'd
The flat red granite ; so by many a sweep
Of meadow smooth from aftermath we reach'd
The griffin-guarded gates, and pass'd thro' all
The pillar'd dusk of sounding sycamores,
And cross'd the garden to the gardener's lodge,

With all its casements bedded, and its walls
And chimneys muffled in the leafy vine.

There, on a slope of orchard, Francis laid
A damask napkin wrought with horse and hound,
Brought out a dusky loaf that smelt of home,
And, half-cut-down, a pasty costly-made,
Where quail and pigeon, lark and leveret lay,
Like fossils of the rock, with golden yolks
Imbedded and injellied ; last, with these,
A flask of cider from his father's vats,
Prime, which I knew ; and so we sat and eat
And talk'd old matters over ; who was dead,
Who married, who was like to be, and how
The races went, and who would rent the hall :
Then touch'd upon the game, how scarce it was
This season ; glancing thence, discuss'd the farm,
The four-field system, and the price of grain ;
And struck upon the corn-laws, where we split,
And came again together on the king
With heated faces ; till he laugh'd aloud ;
And, while the blackbird on the pippin hung
To hear him, clapt his hand in mine and sang—
‘Oh ! who would fight and march and counte
 march,
Be shot for sixpence in a battle-field,

And shovell'd up into some bloody trench
Where no one knows ? but let me live my life.

'Oh ! who would cast and balance at a desk,
Perch'd like a crow upon a three-legg'd stool,
Till all his juice is dried, and all his joints
Are full of chalk ? but let me live my life.

'Who'd serve the state ? for if I carved my name
Upon the cliffs that guard my native land,
I might as well have traced it in the sands ;
The sea wastes all : but let me live my life.

'Oh ! who would love ? I woo'd a woman once,
But she was sharper than an eastern wind,
And all my heart turn'd from her, as a thorn
Turns from the sea ; but let me live my life.'

He sang his song, and I replied with mine :
I found it in a volume, all of songs,
Knock'd down to me, when old Sir Robert's pride,
His books—the more the pity, so I said—
Came to the hammer here in March—and this—
I set the words, and added names I knew.

'Sleep, Ellen Aubrey, sleep, and dream of me :
Sleep, Ellen, folded in thy sister's arm,
And sleeping, haply dream her arm is mine.

'Sleep, Ellen, folded in Emilia's arm ;
Emilia, fairer than all else but thou,

For thou art fairer than all else that is.

'Sleep, breathing health and peace upon her
Sleep, breathing love and trust against her lip
I go to-night : I come to-morrow morn.

'I go, but I return : I would I were
The pilot of the darkness and the dream.
Sleep, Ellen Aubrey, love, and dream of me.'

So sang we each to either, Francis Hale,
The farmer's son, who lived across the bay,
My friend ; and I, that having wherewithal,
And in the fallow leisure of my life
A rolling stone of here and everywhere,
Did what I would ; but ere the night we rose
And saunter'd home beneath a moon, that, just
In crescent, dimly rain'd about the leaf
Twilights of airy silver, till we reach'd
The limit of the hills ; and as we sank
From rock to rock upon the glooming quay,
The town was hush'd beneath us : lower down
The bay was oily calm ; the harbour-buoy,
Sole star of phosphorescence in the calm,
With one green sparkle ever and anon
Dipt by itself, and we were glad at heart.

WALKING TO THE MAIL

John. I'm glad I walk'd. How fresh the meadows
look

Above the river, and, but a month ago,
The whole hill-side was redder than a fox.
Is yon plantation where this byway joins
The turnpike?

James. Yes.

John. And when does this come by?

James. The mail? At one o'clock.

John. What is it now?

James. A quarter to.

John. Whose house is that I see?

No, not the County Member's with the vane :
Up higher with the yew-tree by it, and half
A score of gables.

James. That? Sir Edward Head's :

But he's abroad : the place is to be sold.

John. Oh, his. He was not broken.

James. No, sir, he,
Vex'd with a morbid devil in his blood
That veil'd the world with jaundice, hid his face
From all men, and commercing with himself,
He lost the sense that handles daily life—
That keeps us all in order more or less—
And sick of home went overseas for change.

John. And whither?

James. Nay, who knows? he's here and there.
But let him go; his devil goes with him,
As well as with his tenant, Jocky Dawes.

John. What's that?

James. You saw the man—on Monday, was it?—
There by the humpback'd willow; half stands up
And bristles; half has fall'n and made a bridge;
And there he caught the younker tickling trout—
Caught *in flagrante*—what's the Latin word?—
Delicto: but his house, for so they say,
Was haunted with a jolly ghost, that shook
The curtains, whined in lobbies, tapt at doors,
And rummaged like a rat: no servant stay'd:
The farmer vext packs up his beds and chairs,
And all his household stuff; and with his boy
Betwixt his knees, his wife upon the tilt,
Sets out, and meets a friend who hails him, 'What!

You're flitting !' 'Yes, we're flitting,' says the ghost
(For they had pack'd the thing among the beds,)
'Oh well,' says he, 'you flitting with us too—
Jack, turn the horses' heads and home again.'

John. He left *his* wife behind ; for so I heard.

James. He left her, yes. I met my lady once :
A woman like a butt, and harsh as crabs.

John. Oh yet but I remember, ten years back—
'Tis now at least ten years—and then she was—
You could not light upon a sweeter thing :
A body slight and round, and like a pear
In growing, modest eyes, a hand, a foot
Lessening in perfect cadence, and a skin
As clean and white as privet when it flowers.

James. Ay, ay, the blossom fades, and they that
loved

At first like dove and dove were cat and dog.
She was the daughter of a cottager,
Out of her sphere. What betwixt shame and pride,
New things and old, himself and her, she sour'd
To what she is : a nature never kind !
Like men, like manners : like breeds like, they say :
Kind nature is the best : those manners next
That fit us like a nature second-hand ;
Which are indeed the manners of the great.

John. But I had heard it was this bill that past,
And fear of change at home, that drove him hence.

James. That was the last drop in the cup of gall.
I once was near him, when his bailiff brought
A Chartist pike. You should have seen him wince
As from a venomous thing : he thought himself
A mark for all, and shudder'd, lest a cry
Should break his sleep by night, and his nice eyes
Should see the raw mechanic's bloody thumbs
Sweat on his blazon'd chairs ; but, sir, you know
That these two parties still divide the world—
Of those that want, and those that have : and still
The same old sore breaks out from age to age
With much the same result. Now I myself,
A Tory to the quick, was as a boy
Destructive, when I had not what I would.
I was at school—a college in the South :
There lived a flayflint near ; we stole his fruit,
His hens, his eggs ; but there was law for *us* ;
We paid in person. He had a sow, sir. She,
With meditative grunts of much content,
Lay great with pig, wallowing in sun and mud.
By night we dragg'd her to the college tower
From her warm bed, and up the corkscrew stair
With hand and rope we haled the groaning sow,

And on the leads we kept her till she pigg'd.
Large range of prospect had the mother sow,
And but for daily loss of one she loved
As one by one we took them—but for this—
As never sow was higher in this world—
Might have been happy : but what lot is pure ?
We took them all, till she was left alone
Upon her tower, the Niobe of swine,
And so return'd unfarrow'd to her sty.

John. They found you out ?

James.

Not they.

John.

Well—after all—

What know we of the secret of a man ?
His nerves were wrong. What ails us, who are sound,
That we should mimic this raw fool the world,
Which charts us all in its coarse blacks or whites,
As ruthless as a baby with a worm,
As cruel as a schoolboy ere he grows
To Pity—more from ignorance than will ?

But put your best foot forward, or I fear
That we shall miss the mail : and here it comes
With five at top : as quaint a four-in-hand
As you shall see—three pyebalds and a roan.

EDWIN MORRIS;

OR, THE LAKE

O ME, my pleasant rambles by the lake,
 My sweet, wild, fresh three quarters of a year,
 My one Oasis in the dust and drouth
 Of city life ! I was a sketcher then :
 See here, my doing : curves of mountain, bridge,
 Boat, island, ruins of a castle, built
 When men knew how to build, upon a rock
 With turrets lichen-gilded like a rock :
 And here, new-comers in an ancient hold,
 New-comers from the Mersey, millionaires,
 Here lived the Hills—a Tudor-chimnied bulk
 Of mellow brickwork on an isle of bowers.

O me, my pleasant rambles by the lake
 With Edwin Morris and with Edward Bull
 The curate ; he was fatter than his cure.

But Edwin Morris, he that knew the names,
 ~ learned names of agaric, moss and fern,

Who forged a thousand theories of the rocks,
Who taught me how to skate, to row, to swim,
Who read me rhymes elaborately good,
His own—I call'd him Crichton, for he seem'd
All-perfect, finish'd to the finger nail.

And once I ask'd him of his early life,
And his first passion ; and he answer'd me ;
And well his words became him : was he not
A full-cell'd honeycomb of eloquence
Stored from all flowers ? Poet-like he spoke.

' My love for Nature is as old as I ;
But thirty moons, one honeymoon to that,
And three rich sennights more, my love for her.
My love for Nature and my love for her,
Of different ages, like twin-sisters grew,
Twin-sisters differently beautiful.
To some full music rose and sank the sun,
And some full music seem'd to move and change
With all the varied changes of the dark,
And either twilight and the day between ;
For daily hope fulfill'd, to rise again
Revolving toward fulfilment, made it sweet
To walk, to sit, to sleep, to wake, to breathe.'

Or this or something like to this he spoke.
Then said the fat-faced curate Edward Bull,
‘ I take it, God made the woman for the man,
And for the good and increase of the world.
A pretty face is well, and this is well,
To have a dame indoors, that trims us up,
And keeps us tight ; but these unreal ways
Seem but the theme of writers, and indeed
Worn threadbare. Man is made of solid stuff.
I say, God made the woman for the man,
And for the good and increase of the world.’

‘ Parson,’ said I, ‘ you pitch the pipe too low :
But I have sudden touches, and can run
My faith beyond my practice into his :
Tho’ if, in dancing after Letty Hill,
I do not hear the bells upon my cap,
I scarce have other music : yet say on.
What should one give to light on such a dream ?’
I ask’d him half-sardonically.

‘ Give ?

Give all thou art,’ he answer’d, and a light
Of laughter dimpled in his swarthy cheek ;
‘ I would have hid her needle in my heart,
To save her little finger from a scratch

No deeper than the skin : my ears could hear
Her lightest breath ; her least remark was worth
The experience of the wise. I went and came ;
Her voice fled always thro' the summer land ;
I spoke her name alone. Thrice-happy days !
The flower of each, those moments when we met,
The crown of all, we met to part no more.'

Were not his words delicious, I a beast
To take them as I did ? but something jarr'd ;
Whether he spoke too largely ; that there seem'd
A touch of something false, some self-conceit,
Or over-smoothness : howsoe'er it was,
He scarcely hit my humour, and I said :

'Friend Edwin, do not think yourself alone
Of all men happy. Shall not Love to me,
As in the Latin song I learnt at school,
Sneeze out a full God-bless-you right and left ?
But you can talk : yours is a kindly vein :
I have, I think,—Heaven knows—as much within ;
Have, or should have, but for a thought or two,
That like a purple beech among the greens
Looks out of place : 'tis from no want in her :
It is my shyness, or my self-distrust,



Or something of a wayward modern mind
Dissecting passion. Time will set me right.'

So spoke I knowing not the things that were.
Then said the fat-faced curate, Edward Bull :
'God made the woman for the use of man,
And for the good and increase of the world.'
And I and Edwin laughed ; and now we paused
About the windings of the marge to hear
The soft wind blowing over meadowy holms
And alders, garden-isles ; and now we left
The clerk behind us, I and he, and ran
By ripply shallows of the lipping lake,
Delighted with the freshness and the sound.

But, when the bracken rusted on their crags,
My suit had wither'd, nipt to death by him
That was a God, and is a lawyer's clerk,
The rentroll Cupid of our rainy isles.
'Tis true, we met ; one hour I had, no more :
She sent a note, the seal an *Elle vous suit*,
The close, 'Your Letty, only yours ;' and this
Thrice underscored. The friendly mist of morn
Clung to the lake. I boated over, ran
My craft aground, and heard with beating heart

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The Sweet-Gale rustle round the shelving keel ;
And out I stept, and up I crept : she moved,
Like Proserpine in Enna, gathering flowers :
Then low and sweet I whistled thrice ; and she,
She turn'd, we closed, we kiss'd, swore faith, I breathed
In some new planet : a silent cousin stole
Upon us and departed : ' Leave,' she cried,
' O leave me !' ' Never, dearest, never : here
I brave the worst : ' and while we stood like fools
Embracing, all at once a score of pugs
And poodles yell'd within, and out they came
Trustees and Aunts and Uncles. ' What, with him !
Go' (shrill'd the cotton-spinning chorus) ; ' him !'
I choked. Again they shriek'd the burthen—' Him !'
Again with hands of wild rejection ' Go !—
Girl, get you in !' She went—and in one month
They wedded her to sixty thousand pounds,
To lands in Kent and messuages in York,
And slight Sir Robert with his watery smile
And educated whisker. But for me,
They set an ancient creditor to work :
It seems I broke a close with force and arms :
There came a mystic token from the king
To greet the sheriff, needless courtesy !
I read, and fled by night, and flying turn'd :



Her taper glimmer'd in the lake below :
I turn'd once more, close-button'd to the storm ;
So left the place, left Edwin, nor have seen
Him since, nor heard of her, nor cared to hear.

Nor cared to hear ? perhaps : yet long ago
I have pardon'd little Letty ; not indeed,
It may be, for her own dear sake but this,
She seems a part of those fresh days to me ;
For in the dust and drouth of London life
She moves among my visions of the lake,
While the prime swallow dips his wing, or then
While the gold-lily blows, and overhead
The light cloud smoulders on the summer crag.

THE END

APR 18 1918

